

LANDLORD AND TENANT

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A SERMON

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“Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.”

Isaiah 38:1

NOTWITHSTANDING that a thousand voices proclaim our mortality, we are all too apt to put aside the contemplation of it. Since we cannot escape from death, we endeavor to shut our eyes to it, although there is no subject whose consideration would be more beneficial to us. Altering one word of the poet's line, I may say,—

“Tis greatly wise to talk with our last hours.”

To be familiar with the grave is prudence. To prepare for death, it is well to commune with death. A thoughtful walk in the cemetery is good for our soul's health. As Jeremy Taylor well observes, “Since a man stands perpetually at the door of eternity, and as did John the Almoner, every day is building his sepulchre, and every night one day of our life is gone and passed into the possession of death, it will concern us to take care that the door leading to hell does not open upon us, that we are not crushed to ruin by the stones of our grave, and that our death become not a consignment of us to a sad eternity.” The most of men prefer to cultivate less fruitful fields and turn their thoughts and meditations to subjects trivial for the present—and useless for the future. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

Knowing this general aversion to my theme, I shall not treat it in a gloomy and heavy manner, but shall try to allure you to it by the use of similitudes pleasant and interesting. The subject shall supply the solemnity and I hope the metaphor will secure your interest. Forgive me, you spiritual, if I seem too flippant—my words are not for you, but for a class whose souls I trust you love—who cannot, as yet, bear the more serious thoughts of wisdom, unless they be clothed in parable and picture.

OUR BODY, OUR PROPERTY, OUR FAMILY, THIS PRESENT LIFE, AND ALL ITS SURROUNDINGS ARE IN THE TEXT DESCRIBED AS A HOUSE. This simile is not at all unusual either in the Old or the New Testament. The apostle Paul tells us that “Moses was faithful in all his *house*,” that is to say, in his lifelong charge and duty. Our Lord said of the Pharisees that they devoured widow's *houses*, meaning their estates. And Paul, referring to his body, said, “We know that if our earthly *house* of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” We will see what instruction we can find in this most simple but comprehensive comparison.

I. This mortal life and its surroundings are likened to a house and the first point of the similitude will be seen if we inquire, WHO IS THE LANDLORD?

The first answer is *that certainly we are not*. To all men, it may be truthfully said, “Ye are not your own.” We are tenants, but not freeholders. We are mere tenants at will without a lease. The earthly house of this tabernacle belongs to Him who built it. He who sustains it keeps the title deeds in His own possession. *Our house belongs to God.*

Dear friend, do you ever think of this? Do you remember, as a matter of fact, that *you and yours are God's property*? He created you and created you for His own glory. Your soul was spoken into existence

by Him. Your bodily powers were all bestowed by His hand. You are the creature of the Almighty. In every vein, sinew, and nerve of your body, there are traces of the Divine Embroiderer's skill. You are God's in all the most secret goings and issues of your life, for to Him you owe every day the continued possession of your existence.

Your breath is in your nostrils, but HE keeps it there. He has but to will it, and the atoms composing your body, which HE now keeps apart from their fellows, would return to the bosom of the earth. You are but a walking heap of dust and the cohesion of the various particles is maintained by the hand of Omnipotence. Let the sustaining power of God be withdrawn, and your bodily house would fall in the ruin of death, and the utter dissolution of corruption.

All that you have around you is in the same predicament, for food and raiment, house and goods, are God's gifts to you. The strength of hand or the nimbleness of brain that has enabled you to accumulate wealth, or to live in comfort, has all come from Him. Day by day you are a commoner at the table of divine bounty, a pensioner hour by hour upon the infinite mercy of God. You have nothing and are nothing but as God pleases. You owe all you have and all you are to Him.

It is most useful for each of us to know *what are the rights of God towards us*. Even if we do not acknowledge them, yet candor demands that at least we hear them defined. Sad is the reflection, however, that when we learn these rights, if we resist them, we become willful robbers and so increase our guilt. If we will not have God to reign over us, if, in our spirits we say, like Pharaoh, "Who is the LORD, that we should obey his voice?" it will go harder with us at the last than if we had never heard the claims of God proclaimed.

Men and women, how is it that God has made you and yet so many of you never think of Him? Shall I bring against you the accusation which the prophet of old brought against his people? "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

Who among you would retain in your house a tool or a piece of furniture which was of no use or value to you? Who among you would keep so much as an ox or an ass if it rendered you no service? How much less would you nurture it if, instead thereof, it did you harm—if it had a spite against you and lifted up its heels against you?

And yet, are there not some here who have been forgetful of their obligations to their Maker, who have never been of any service to Him, have never praised Him, have never desired to advance His glory? But who, on the contrary, have even spoken high and haughty thingy things against Him, and it may be words of profanity and blasphemy? O God, how are You ill-treated in the very world which is full of Your goodness!

How do the creatures of Your hand render unto You evil for good! Your house, which You have let out to man, is made into a castle for Your foes, a temple for idols, a den of thieves, a nest of unclean birds. You are ill requited at the hands of Your unworthy tenants. You Best of beings, you Fountain of love and mercy, what do You receive from many of Your creatures but forgetfulness and disdain?

Bear this in mind henceforth, that the house in which we dwell, in this life, has God for its Landlord, and that we are only tenants.

II. The simile runs further. WHAT IS MAN'S LEASE?

One would imagine, from the way in which some men talk, that we were freeholders, or at least had a lease for nine hundred and ninety-nine years. The truth is, *we are but tenants at will*. We may possess the tenement, in which our soul now finds a house for itself, together with its appurtenances and outhouses, for the term of seventy years, and the tenure may even be prolonged to fourscore years, or even to a longer period in rare cases. But at no one time is the tenure altered.

We always occupy from moment to moment. Our lease is not for three, seven, fourteen, or twenty-one years, nor is it even from day to day, or from hour to hour—but from second to second we hold precarious possession. We are tenants at the absolute will of God. The commencement of a day never

secures the ending of it to us alive, and the striking of the clock, as the commencement of the hour, is no guarantee that we shall hear it strike again.

Every second, we hold our lives, and goods, and chattels upon the sole tenure of the divine will. God has but to say to us, "Return, ye children of men," and we return to the dust. Flowers are not more frail, moths more fragile, bubbles more unsubstantial, or meteors more fleeting than man's life. What transient things we are! I said, *We are*, but I made a mistake—we are *not*. We but begin to be, and ere we are, we are not. It is God alone who can say, "I AM." None of the human race should dare to pronounce those words.

Yet how many live as if their tenant rights of this mortal life, and all its goods, were a fixed tenure and entailed upon themselves irrespective of assigns, or heirs, or superior lord of the manor or freeholder of the soil. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue forever and their dwelling places to all generations. They call their lands after their own names." To such people as these, the words of the apostle James are very applicable, "Come now, you who say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such-and-such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away."

Yet how often we fall into the same error! Have not some of you, my friends, been laying out your plans for months and even years to come? You have considered where you will spend the summer and where you will live when you retire from your business. Ah, boast not yourselves of tomorrow, much less of summer or of autumn, for you know not what a day, or even an hour, may bring forth.

O man of dying woman born, ask of God to give you day by day your daily bread and let your living and your planning be after the fashion of day by day, for when you begin to reckon for far-off time, it looks as if you had never prayed, "So teach me to number my days, that I may apply my heart unto wisdom." O you young ones, say not, "We will give the first and best of our days to the flesh, and offer God the rest."

O you young ones, say not, "We will give the first and best of our days to the flesh, and offer to God the rest." You may have no remaining years to offer. You may be consumed in the morning of your lives. Say not, you men who are in the midst of the world's business, "We will retire soon, and in the cool of our age we will think upon the things of God." You may have no evening of old age, perhaps your sun will go down at noon. You may be called hence, from the counting-house, while yet the ink upon the pages of the ledger is undried, and the Bible as yet unstudied.

Set your house in order, for your great Landlord may serve an ejectment notice upon you, and there will be no hope of resisting it, though the wisest of physicians should seek to bar the door. Here is the writ and these are the express words, "Thou shalt die, and not live." Even the most aged presume that they shall live yet longer and the traditions of Jenkyns and of Old Parr, I doubt not, have tempted hundreds to imagine, even when they have been verging upon eighty or ninety, that they may still live a few years longer in quiet possession of their tottering tenement whose pillars are shaken, whose windows are darkened, and whose very foundations are decaying.

We cling with dreadful tenacity to this poor life and the little which we foolishly call our all. It were well if we could cling with such fast hold to the life that is to come, for that alone is worth clinging to, since it is forever—whereas this is to be but for a little time even at the longest.

What a reflection it is that within a hundred years, every one in our most crowded audiences (unless the Lord shall come), will be soundly sleeping amid the clods of the valley—and not one of all the present armies of men that populate our cities will be in possession of his house and lands, or will know aught of anything that is done under the sun!

We shall have gone over to "the great majority." We shall be, perhaps, remembered, perhaps forgotten, but at any rate, we ourselves shall mingle no more with our fellows in the mart, the street, the places of worship, or the haunts of pleasure. We shall depart from sea and land, from city and village, from earth and all that is thereon.

Where will our immortal natures be? Where will our spirits be? Shall we be communing among the blessed harpers whose every note is bliss, or shall we be forever gnashing our teeth in remorse among the castaways who would not receive the mercy of God? We hold our house, then, on no firmer tenure than from moment to moment. Remember this, you dwellers in these houses of clay!

There is this clause in the lease, which I am afraid some have never observed, namely, that *the Landlord has at all times the right of ingress and egress over His own property*. I thank God that some of us have yielded to the Lord this right, and now our prayer often is that He would come into our house, and search us, and try us, and know our ways, and see if there be any evil way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting.

Time was when the last thing we wished for was the presence of God, when we said to Him, “Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.” But now, being renewed by His Spirit, we say to Him, “Abide with us.” Beloved friend, are you always ready to open the doors of your heart to God’s inspection? Do you delight in heavenly communion? Do you constantly invite the Lord Jesus to come in and sup with you, and you with Him? If not, you are forgetting one great clause in your lease, and let me also say, you are forgetting the greatest privilege that men can enjoy beneath the stars.

It is well for me to recall to your memories that, according to our tenure, *our great Landlord permits us to call upon Him to execute all repairs*. Our circumstances are apt to grow straitened, and He it is who gives us power to get wealth, He daily loads us with benefits. When our bodily tabernacle is shaken, He it is who heals all our diseases. When our sorrows and wants multiply, He it is who satisfies our mouth with good things, so that our youth is renewed like the eagle’s.

It is well, no doubt, when we are sick, to seek direction from the physician, but it is a Christian action to resort first to JEHOVAH-Rophi, the Lord that heals us. “Is any sick among you?” What says the apostle? Does he say, “Let him use no medicine,” as some “Peculiar People” say? Nay. Does he say, “Use medicine and nothing else,” as the most of professors do? No such thing. Does he say, “Let him lie in bed, and expect his minister to come and see him,” as though ministers, and elders, and deacons were omniscient? No such thing.

“Is any sick among you? Let him call”—that is his duty—“let him call for the elders of the church.” And then, as the form of medicine then in vogue was that of anointing the body with oil, “let them pray over him,” and let them use the ordinary means, “anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” Have your medicine by all means, your homeopathy or your allopathy, or whatever may seem best, but beside that, make prayer your main confidence, for it is the Lord that heals us.

Jesus is the beloved Physician. If we had more faith in God and resorted more often to Him by prayer and faith, the prescriptions of the medical man might be more often wise, and his medicines more frequently useful. The Lord, who made our house, best knows how to repair the tenement and He permits us to resort to Him. When you are sick, my friend, remember this, and practice it.

III. Thus, then, have we spoken of the Landlord and the lease. Now, thirdly, we come to THE RENT THAT IS TO BE PAID.

We occupy a house which is evidently not our own and therefore there must be some rent to pay. What is it? The rent that God asks of His tenants is *that they should praise Him as long as they live*. “Oh!” say you, “that is but little.” I grant you that it is. It is but a peppercorn, a mere acknowledgment, but yet there are millions who never pay even that. They offer the Lord no thanks, no love, no service.

For the benefits they receive, they make no return, or rather, they make an evil recompense. The breath that He gives them is never turned to song. The food they eat is not sanctified with gratitude. The goods that He bestows are not tithed, nor are the first fruits of their increase offered to the Lord. Their hearts do not love Him. Their faith does not trust in His dear Son—their lips do not speak of Him and magnify His glorious name.

This is most unrighteous and ungenerous. For us to praise God is not a costly or painful business. The heart that praises God finds a sweet return in the exercise itself. In heaven, it is the heaven of perfect spirits to praise the Lord. And on earth, we are nearest heaven when we are fullest of the praises of

JEHOVAH. But how ungrateful are those who are tenants in God's house and yet refuse the little tribute which He asks of them!

The question is raised, *how often ought the rent to be paid?* You know, in law, the time when the rent of a house is due always bears a relation to the tenure upon which it is held. If a man takes a house by the year, he pays his rent by the year. If he takes it by the quarter, he pays by the quarter. And if we hold our house by the moment, we are bound to pay by the moment.

So, then, it was but simple justice when David said, "I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth." To live in the perpetual exercise of praise to God, is at once the Christian's duty and delight. "Nay," says one, "but we cannot do that, we have other things to think of." But remember, when the praises of God are not on our lips, they should be in our hearts. The incense was in the censer even when it was not smoking—our praise should abide with us till opportunity permits the holy fire to be applied.

Besides, I believe that our God is best praised in common things. He who mends a shoe with a right motive is praising God as much as the seraph who pours forth his celestial sonnet. You in your workshops, you in your families, you on your sickbeds, you anywhere according to your avocations—if you offer, through Jesus the Mediator, the love of your hearts—are paying the rent of praise unto God Most High. Oh, to be continually doing this!

But brethren, *I am afraid that we are in arrears.* Those of us who have paid the most rent are still far behindhand. Yes, you were grumbling this morning—that was not rendering a worthy recompense for benefits received. Shall a living man complain? There are some who do little else but complain. They complain of the times, of the weather, of the government, of their families, of their trade. If, for once, they would complain of themselves they might have a more deserving subject for fault-finding.

The Lord is good and does good, and let His name be blessed. Let us, as His people, avow that, though He slay us, yet we will trust in Him. And if He make us groan under His heavy hand, we will even weep out His praises, and our expiring sigh shall be but a note of our life's psalm, which we hope to exchange full soon for the song of the celestial host above. Praising and blessing God in life, practically by obedience, and heartily with gratitude—this is the rent which is due for the house in which we dwell.

Are there not some of you who have not even recognized that you belong to God at all, and who up till now have been paying rent and rendering service to another master? I am often amazed in my soul at what men will do for that black master, the devil. Why, sirs, the devil will sometimes summon men to one of his conventicles at the street corner, where the gas is flaming, and they will cheerfully obey the summons.

They will meet in such places with companions who are rude, boisterous, selfish, vulgar, and everything else that is undesirable and call them "jolly good fellows." If the devil would pick out some fine brave spirits for them to meet—men of wit, and genius, and information, one would not wonder so much at the readiness with which the dupes assemble, but the congregations of Satan are usually made up of men and women of the lowest and most degraded kind, and these people know it.

But when they are beckoned off to the assembly of the scornors, they go with the greatest readiness. And what is done at this gathering of the foolish? Well, they commune together in stupidities at which it must be hard to laugh, and meanwhile, they pass round the cup of liquid fire, out of which they cheerfully drink, and drink, and drink again, though each successive goblet is filled with deeper damnation.

These willing slaves drink at their master's bidding, though the cup makes their brain reel, sets their heart on flame, and makes them unable to keep their feet. Yes, and when he still cries, "Drink, yea, drink abundantly," these faithful servants swallow down the poison till they lie down like logs, or roar like demons. They will keep putting the cup of death to their lips, till delirium tremens comes upon them and possesses them as with hell itself. Thousands obediently render homage to Satan by drinking away their lives and ruining their souls.

How much further they go in serving their master than we do in following ours! Into hell itself they follow their accursed leader. They pay him his revenues without arrears, and yet his taxes are heavy and his exactions are most oppressive. Why, we have seen great lords hand all their estates over to Beelzebub. And when he has set up before them an image in the shape of a horse with a blue ribbon, they have bowed down and worshipped it, and offered their all at his shrine! I wish we could meet with some who would do as much for Christ as these have done for the devil.

Any kind of fashion, which may rule the hour, draws a mad crowd after it. No matter how absurd or ridiculous the mania, the worshippers of fashion cry, "These be thy gods, O Israel." Yes, Satan is marvelously well-obeyed by his servants. His rent is regularly paid, and yet he is not the rightful owner, and has no title to the house of manhood.

Yes, men will even run after him to offer their homage. They will throw down their lives before his Juggernaut car of profligacy and cast themselves beneath its wheels, while the golden chariot of Christ, paved with love for men, traverses their streets, and they have not a word of acclamation or of praise for that Prince of Peace.

O come, you servants of Jesus, and be ashamed of this! Come and render to your Lord your full service. Throw your hearts' enthusiasm into your religion. Be at least as earnest for God as others are for the devil. Be at least as self-denying and self-sacrificing as they are who run the mad career of sin. Pay your rent to the great Landlord and let the arrears be made up.

IV. But I must not linger. The next point to be considered is MAN'S DUTY WITH REGARD TO THIS HOUSE OF WHICH HE IS THE TENANT.

The text says, "Set thine house in order." This shows that *we are not to destroy it, nor even to injure it*. Our body should be the temple of the Holy Ghost. Nothing should be done by us that may injure our body, for, in the case of the believer, it is a precious thing, ordained to rise, again at the last day, since Christ Jesus has bought it, as well as the soul which it contains, with His own blood. Nor are we to waste our substance, for this is the accusation which, of old, was brought against the unjust steward, that he had wasted his master's goods.

We are to set our house in order, that is, *our own house*. Some persons are very busy setting other people's houses in order and oh, how fast their tongues will go when they are sweeping out their neighbor's kitchen or dusting out his cupboard! *Set your own houses in order*, sirs, before you attempt to arrange the affairs of other people.

Again, *the tenant himself must do it*. "Set thine house in order." You must not leave it to a priest. You must not ask your fellow man to become responsible for you. You must make personal application to Him who can set all in order for you, even to Him who came into the world and died for this very purpose. If you need oil for your lamps, you must go to them that sell and buy for yourselves, for your fellow virgins can give you none of their oil. Set your own house in order. This is the chief business of every living man as a tenant under God.

What kind of order is my house to be set in? My conscience will help to tell me that. An enlightened conscience tells us in what kind of order our heart, our family, and our business should be. By its teachings, we may learn how all the departments of the house should be ordered. It cannot be right that the body should be master over the soul—conscience tells us that.

It cannot be right that the memory should retain only that which is evil. It cannot be right that the affections should grovel in the mire. It cannot be right that the judgment should put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Conscience says that the heart is never right till the whole man is in Christ—till, by a living faith, we have embraced Jesus as our full salvation and have received the Holy Spirit as our Sanctifier. We are never right till we are right with conscience, and conscience tells us that we are never right till we are right with God. "Set thine house in order." Obey the inward monitor, listen to the still small voice, and prepare to meet your God.

Do you ask, "*What is God's order?*" You can see, by reading the twentieth chapter of the Book of Exodus what His thought of order was when He wrote the ten commands. You can learn what His order

is under the Gospel, for we read that a new commandment has Christ given to us, that we love one another. And yet again, “This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.”

Dear friend, is your house, in this sense, right with God? If, at this moment, you had to surrender possession, is everything ordered as you would wish it to be? If the arrow of death should now fly through this sanctuary and find a target in your heart at this moment, is it all right, *is it all right*, IS IT ALL RIGHT, as you would wish to have it when God’s eye shall look upon you in the day of judgment?

What if in a single moment we should see the heavens on a blaze, and the earth should rock beneath our feet, and the dead should rise from their sepulchres? What if, instead of this Tabernacle and its gathered crowd, we should now suddenly see the King Himself upon the great white throne and hear the archangel’s trumpet ringing out the notes, “Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment,” is everything with us as we should like to have it for the blaze of that tremendous day and the inspection of that awful Judge?

Happy is that man who can say, “I have committed all to Christ—my body, soul, and spirit—all my powers and all my affections. I have committed all to Him by faith and prayer, so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly for it is all right even now.” “Set thine house in order,” then. Conscience and God’s Word will be your guides as to what is needed.

But I am afraid that in you, my friend, *very many things need careful attention and rearrangement*. Oh, that every day each of us lived a Christly life, for then we should not need to be told to set our house in order! I, as pastor of this church, though I trust I am not an idler, have never been able to look upon my own work with any sort of satisfaction. I am obliged to stand where the publican stood, with the prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” upon my lips, for my work is too vast and I am too feeble.

Is there any man here who can say that he fills his sphere to the full without an omission or transgression? If you can say so, my brother, I envy you, for it is not long before you will be in heaven. If that be not a self-righteous estimate, or a vainglorious opinion of yourself, inasmuch as you are so meet for heaven, you will soon be there—depend upon that.

But whatever there may be about us now, dear friends, which is not what we feel it ought to be, let the call come to each one of us at this moment, “Set thine house in order.” The vain regrets in which we sometimes indulge, we often mistake for true repentance, but let us recollect that—

*“Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve
By doing so no more.”*

As believers in Jesus Christ, if there is anything deficient in us, if there be anything excessive in us, if there be aught that is contrary to the Lord’s mind and will, may the Holy Spirit come and correct it all, so that our house may be set in order!

Thus have I shown you in what manner our houses should be kept. But I am afraid that many of your houses want a great deal of setting in order. *Some of your houses need sweeping*. The dust and filth of sin are lying all over the floors. You want the precious blood to be sprinkled, or else if the Lord begins to sweep with the bosom of the law, it will happen, as Bunyan tells us, that the dust will be enough to choke your prayers or blind the eyes of your faith. May the Gospel come and sprinkle the water of grace and then may Christ come in and sweep your house.

But you need more than sweeping—*your house wants washing*. Every floor needs cleansing and there is no one but the Lord Jesus Christ who can do this. Nothing can make you clean but His blood. In many of your houses the windows are very filthy and the light of the glorious Gospel cannot enter, so as to bring with it an intelligent conception of the things of God. Oh, that this may be set right!

The very drainage in some men's houses is neglected. Many a foul thing stagnates, ferments, and pollutes their souls. Ah! what is there that is in order in the unregenerate man? To every one in that state, the text calls loudly, "Set *thine* house in order." But sirs, unless Christ comes to help you, it is a hopeless task. Unless Christ and His Holy Spirit come to the rescue, your houses will remain out of order still, everything filthy and everything disarranged, and when the great King shall come and find it so, woe unto you, woe unto you, in the day of His appearing!

V. We shall close with the last thought, which is this, WE ARE BIDDEN TO SET OUR HOUSE IN ORDER, BECAUSE WE ARE SERVED WITH A NOTICE TO QUIT. "Set thine house in order; *for thou shalt die, and not live.*"

This is not a reason for setting a house in order which bad tenants would care to consider—they wish to leave the house in as dilapidated a state as possible. But a just tenant desires to restore to his landlord his property unhurt. So is it with the man who is right with God. He wishes that when he dies, he may leave here on earth no trace of injury done to God, but many memorials of service rendered. He does not wish to leave the house as Satan left the poor possessed demoniac, rending and tearing him, because he was coming out of him, having great wrath because his time was short.

No, the honest man, who loves his God, desires to leave everything behind him that shall honor God and nothing that shall dishonor Him. Whitefield used to tell a story of a young man who could not live in the house where his old father had dwelt, because he said, "Every chair in it smelt of piety." He was a wicked, godless, rebellious, Christless man, and he could not stay where his father's holiness would force itself upon his memory and rebuke him.

Oh, I would like to make every chair in my house like that, so that when my boy comes into possession of it, he will think, "Why, there my father sat to study God's Word, and there he used to kneel in prayer, and now I have his house, I must imitate his ways."

A dear man of God, who has now gone to heaven, took me into his study one day and said to me, "You see that spot?" "Yes." "Well, that is the place where my dear wife used to kneel to pray and that is where, one morning, when I came to look for her, as she did not come down to breakfast, I found her dead." "Oh!" said he, "that is holy ground." And so it was, for she was a very gracious woman.

Oh, that we may so live that everything we leave behind us may be like Abel's blood that cried from the ground! May our habits and manners be such that, after our death, everything associated with us may be perfumed with holy memories! God make it so! God make it so!

Are you sure it will be so? I must appeal to some of you Christian people—are you not too negligent? Are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God? Might there not be much amiss with you if you were now called away? I beseech you, set your house in order.

Beloved friend in Christ, do try that everything may be in order for your dying, and everything now prepared for your departure, if it should happen tonight. *Do it for the church's sake.* So live that when the church misses you, there shall be left behind you your gracious memory and your holy example to inspire those who will mourn your departure.

So live that *the world* may miss your zealous efforts for its good. May all be so ordered, in your life, that you may never lead others astray by your example, but bequeath it as a legacy of encouragement to your successors! Order all things well *for your children's sake.* They will be pretty much what their parents were. Sovereign grace may interpose, but ordinarily, the mother shapes the child's life. May your life be such that it shall be a fair mold for your child's future existence!

Set your house in order, my dear brother, even though you are leaving it, *because you are going to a better one if you are a believer in Christ.* The old clay shed will be taken down and you shall dwell in marble halls. You shall leave the hovel for the mansion. The traveler's tent shall be rolled up and put away in the tomb to be exchanged for "a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Oh, let it not be said that you were so bad a tenant in the first house that you could not be trusted with a second, but may grace cause you so to set this house in order that you may quit it without

reluctance, and enter into the next with alacrity, leaving your first house behind you without shame, in sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection!

May you cheerfully leave the first house and joyfully surrender the key to the great Landlord, because you know that, go where He will in all its rooms, He will see the remembrances of His own grace, the marks of His own workmanship, the beauties and adornments of His own Holy Spirit. Then, conveyed by ministering spirits to a better country, you shall become possessors of a heritage undefiled, which fades not away.

I desire, in closing, that all of us may offer the key of our house to the great Landlord and own that we live on sufferance as His tenants. A dear brother told us, the other day, when he was speaking of his being over seventy years of age, that his lease had run out and that he was now living by the day. Let us each, in all things, carry out his remark and live by the day. Let us remember that “now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”

Let us not act as if we expected to remain long in these lowlands. It is a dreadful thing to see men, who profess to be Christians, unwilling to die. Should it be so that, when we feel ourselves ill, and likely to die, we should have a host of matters to arrange and many regrets to express? Dear brethren, begin your regrets earlier, while there is time to retrieve the past. Regret now, and ask for grace now to do all that is in you for Him who loved you, and bought you with His blood.

As for you who have no redeeming blood upon you, I do not marvel that you live to yourselves. O you who despise Christ, I do not wonder if you despise yourselves so much as to be the slaves of pleasure! But you, who are the elect of God, who are bought by the blood of Jesus, who are called by His Spirit, who profess to be His people—you have nobler things to live for. I pray you, make us not to be ashamed of you by living as if you were mere worldlings, who have their portion in this life.

Live for eternity. Live for Christ's glory. Live to win souls. Behave as occupiers under a Royal Owner should behave. With such a Landlord, the best in the whole universe, be also the best of tenants, and evermore be mindful of the time of your removal to another land. Let my last words remain with you, and that they may, I will quote them from a book in which wisdom is set forth in goodly sentences.

*“Gird up your mind to contemplation, trembling inhabitant of the earth;
Tenant of a hovel for a day, you are heir of the universe forever!
For, neither congealing of the grave, nor gulphing waters of the firmament,
Nor expansive airs of heaven, nor dissipative fires of Gehenna,
Nor rust of rest, nor wear, nor waste, nor loss, nor chance, nor change,
Shall avail to quench or overwhelm the spark of soul within thee!”*

“Look to thy soul, O man, for none can be surety for his brother:
Behold, for heaven—or for hell—thou canst not escape from Immortality!”

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.